



Brussels, 9 February 2009

"SIDELINING OF THE OVER-50s, AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE... BUT WHAT A WASTE OF HUMAN RESOURCES!"

Many officials over the age of 50 have the painful experience of being sidelined within their service. **R&D** receives numerous reports from distraught colleagues of having their jobs taken away from them overnight, or of being prevented from performing useful work that matches their skills and/or experience.

PARADOX AND CONTRADICTIONS

For years, the Commission has been using its Communications to concentrate on the needs of the labour market, the employment of seniors, imbalances in pension schemes, and particularly on the high cost of early pensions, and has recommended one and all, *urbi et orbi*, to increase staffing levels and maintain the overall length of employment, and even to prolong it. And, addressing in particular the economic and social players in the member states, it no less generously urges them to enhance the value of employees' skills and guarantee their quality of life at the workplace.

It is paradoxical that the selfsame Commission should contradict itself by allowing some of its own human resources in the higher age brackets to slip passively into being supernumeraries and have to fend for themselves.

STILL NO STAFF POLICY NOTWITHSTANDING THE REFORMS

Since the reforms of Mr Kinnock, sadly pursued by Mr Kallas, the DG ADMIN and Directors-General have been relentlessly restructuring services, allegedly to adapt them to the latest priorities, implement new policies, or absorb the poorly evaluated effects of successive enlargements.

These changes provide an opportunity for some officials to expand their power, increase their visibility and accelerate their career development. For other officials, though, they also mean reduced motivation and – the reports are alarming – a more systematic sidelining of older colleagues.

When the restructuring of services is being planned and organised, it is often done in secret, and it is sometimes improvised: the rules and procedures designed to guarantee the interests of those concerned are flouted, and it takes a long time for the information to reach them. Most of the time, the DG ADMIN is happy to sit back and support the demands of the cabinets and Directors-General that initiated the changes in the first place.

The colleagues concerned are treated like pawns, and those who have been sidelined are left to fend for themselves. They no longer have any employment prospects. There is clear evidence that the officials most exposed to being sidelined are those over the age of 50.

The Commission, the upper hierarchy and the DG ADMIN are to blame for failing to produce a genuine staff policy, and particularly a redundancy programme to support the worst-placed colleagues and those coping badly with the changes.

They are also to blame for focusing on an evaluation and promotion procedure that encourages arbitrary behaviour and inequalities.

RESPECT AND DIGNITY FOR OUR COLEAGUES

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Membres du Comité Exécutif: Franco IANNIELLO, Giuseppe ADURNO, Isa BIRKE, Domingos DIAS, Michael DOCHERTY Fabien DURAND, Raymond HILL, Emile KIMMAN, Raffaele NAPOLITANO, Michele OTTATI, Helena Ferreira Ramos VLAHOPOULOS, Helga VOGELMANN, Cristiano SEBASTIANI, Helen SUTCLIFFE, Bruno UGUCCIONI.



For some officials, this sidelining is accompanied by various forms of harassment, and this sometimes leads to illness, and particularly depression. Structures providing advice and support (including psychological support) are rarely made available.

R&D wishes to remind managers who are directly involved in dealing with situations that could lead to colleagues, and particularly those over 50, being sidelined, that under the terms of the Staff Regulations, all measures taken must be solely in the interests of the service, and that they need to be justified. However, professional ethics demand that these measures must respect the people concerned and not undermine their dignity.

MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

R&D proposes opening a contact point for sidelined colleagues. If they wish, they can phone 55676 for a confidential discussion on your situation. If necessary, they could arrange to have regular meetings to decide on what action to take with the DG ADMIN, Human Resources and various DGs.

R&D will henceforth notify the Administration of cases that require formal action on its part.

R&D calls on Vice-President Kallas and the DG ADMIN to review current procedures for restructuring services so that the staff concerned are better protected, and especially when tasks are being reallocated. In particular, **R&D** recommends that the applicant service is obliged to report on the impact of the forthcoming restructuring on the distribution of tasks and the workload of the staff directly concerned.

R&D demands that one of the measures to be taken before a person's assignment is restructured or changed should be to provide a detailed description of his/her future tasks. With regard to colleagues who are over the age of 50 and usually have experience gained in services, these tasks must be reasonably linked to previous levels of experience and responsibility and to the legitimate expectations of the people concerned. If appropriate, special training sessions should be put on for these colleagues to enable them to transfer to the new services as smoothly as possible.

R&D also proposes that representatives on the Staff Committee should be involved in examining all restructuring exercises in Commission services in line with the procedure for promotion.

R&D insists that the DG ADMIN should now become a real inter-disciplinary service employing enough people who are well qualified in psychological support, professional support and training, and have recognised practical experience in these fields.

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